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ABSTRACT

A study analyzed current perceptions of selected school board members, superintendents, principals, counselors, teachers, preservice teachers, students, and parents, in three areas of Texas representing urban, suburban, and rural areas (N=190), toward topics related to discipline, classroom management, drugs, absenteeism, and behavioral responsiblilty within the junior high/middle school setting. The survey questionnaire was designed to replicate the Gallup Poll at local levels, and state responses on specific items were compared to national responses. The data indicated a definite polarization of perception of discipline problems and consequently of classroom management. Preservice teachers, parents, and students believed that discipline is a "fairly serious" problem, while school personnel felt it is "not too serious." Teachers and students believed stealing is a problem, while other groups did not. Excepting 72 percent of the teachers, all groups perceived that good classroom management comes from teachers who motivate and interest students in learning. Preservice teachers believed marijuana and alcohol were serious problems; teachers and counselors believed they were not a problem. All groups were undecided as to the proper action to be taken on absenteeism. Study findings also indicated a desire for more responsiblity on the part of parents for their child's behavior. Other study findings are discussed and 27 tables and 3 figures are included. (JMK)

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ATTITUDES OF SELECTED GROUPS TOWARD ISSUES IN JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Paper presented at the annual conference of
the National Middle School Association,
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ATTITUDES OF SELECTED GROUPS TOWARD ISSUES

IN JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

A review of professional literature indicated that educators have persistently sought means of identifying the perceptions of various goups toward classroom management topics. (Smith, 1981; Summerlin and Ward, 1981; Benninga, 1981; Deci, 1981; Lasley, 1981; Duea, 1982) During the past fifteen years, the Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools has, in the process of gathering data related to those issues, become something of a national institution. These poll reports have gained the attention of educators, students of education, politicians, writers, and lay people as no other survey has done. Reporting the attitudes and perceptions of the public about their public schools creates a focus point of opinion. Heretofore, the polls have dealt with opinions about public schools K through 12. Seldom is the focus solely based on grades 5 through 9 in the public schools. Students in grades 5 through 9 are generally ages 11 through 14. This is a critical time in the formation of values, attitudes, and belief systems and it is important to document the attitudes held by parents, administrators, school board members, teachers, counselors, and future teachers about issues concerning the behavior and management of students. By sampling the students one can observe how closely attitudes and perceptions relate to other factions dealing with this age group. There is a dearth of information about the relation of attitudes toward major problems

confronting the junior high/middle school.

THE PROBLEM

The problem of the study was an analysis of the current perceptions of selected school board members, superintendents, principals, counselors, teachers, students, and parents toward topics related to discipline, classroom management, drugs, absenteeism, and responsibility within the junior high/middle school setting.

The working hypothesis of the study is that there is a significant difference in the perceptions and attitudes held by the various groups polled. The importance of the pilot study lies with communicating the findings and the implications for future management of classrooms and behavior of adolescent students.

PROCEDURES FOR COLLECTING DATA

The procedures for collecting data consisted of the following sequential steps:

(1) A Phi Delta Kappa workshop designed to instruct the participants in procedures for polling the attitudes of a community on educational issues was attended;

(2) Each of the sequential Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public School was reviewed;

(3) A questionnaire, using items previously constructed and validated, was developed with junior high/middle school adaptations;

(4) The questionnaire was mailed to districts selected to represent distinctly different geographic areas in Texas with small, medium, and large school districts. The areas represented urban, suburban, and rural schools;

(Respondents represented eleven categories: school board member, superintendent, principal, counselor, student, parent, mathematics teacher, social studies teacher, language arts teacher, science teacher, and physical education teacher.) The mailing was transmitted to the superintendent who, in turn, transmitted a questionnaire to a school board member. The junior high/middle school principal was given a set of questionnaires for counselors, teachers, students, and parents. Anonymity was assured to all parties involved. Each principal selected a teacher of mathematics, social studies, language arts, science, and physical education to respond. The teachers randomly selected five studnets from their classes to respond and to take a questionnaire to their parents to be completed without consultation;

(5) A group of twenty-six pre-service secondary teachers were polled the semester before teaching in the public schools;

(6) A follow-up request was made to those who failed to respond to the mailed questionnaire; 109 responded to the questionnarie;

(7) Data were collected, processed, and treated. An analysis was made. Conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

INSERT FIGURE 1

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

A review of the professional literature emphasizes the difficulty one has with the task of deciding exactly what constitutes discipline in the middle school classroom. (Jones and Tanner, 1981, Goldsmith, 1981) When asked to consider the elements of discipline, an investigation of the data reveals 50 percent or more of the eight groups agreed that "obeying rules and regulations" should be included. Fifty percent or more of all groups except teachers, counselors, and students include "authority and control by teachers" in their definition.

Fifty percent or more of all groups except pre-service teachers, counselors, parents, and students chose to include "respect for teachers." Fifty percent or more of teachers and superintendents include "students' lack of willingness to learn." Fifty percent of the school board members and superintendents include "fighting and/or violence" and "smoking or drugs" in their definition.

The question:

When we talk about "discipline" in the schools, just what does this mean to you?

INSERT TABLE 1

THE PROBLEM OF DISCIPLINE IN THE LOCAL SCHOOLS

Question two sought to determine how serious the problem of discipline is perceived in today's junior high/middle schools.

An investigation of the data describing how serious the problem of discipline is in the public junior high/middle school indicates pre-service teacers consider the challenge to be "fairly serious," teachers and school board members agree that it is "not too serious," while superintendents, parents, and student groups divided their choices between "fairly serious" and "not too serious." Principals divided their selections between "not too serious" and "not at all serious," with counselors considering the problem to be "fairly serious" or "not too serious."

The question:

How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the junior high/middle school?

INSERT TABLE 2

A study of the data provided by the 1982 Gallup Poll survey reveals approximately seven persons in ten regard discipline as a "very serious" or "fairly serious" problem. Only two in ten say it is "not too serious" or "not at all serious."

The question:

> How serious a problem would you say discipline is in the public schools in this community - very serious, fairly serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

INSERT FIGURE 2

MAJOR PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

When respondents to the 1983 Texas junior high/middle school survey were asked to identify the biggest problem facing the junior high/middle school faculty today, the top four problems cited were "parents' lack of interest, lack of discipline, pupils' lack of interest, and teachers' lack of interest."

"Lack of discipline" headed the list of major problems confronting the public schools in the 1982 and 1983 studies. "Lack of proper financial support, use of drugs, and poor curriculum/poor standards" followed, providing the four predominent concerns identified nationally.

The top four problems identified in the 1983 national survey were discipline, use of drugs, poor curriculum/poor standards,

and lack of financial support.

The question:

What do you think is the biggest problem with which the junior high/middle school faculty must deal?

INSERT FIGURE 3

WHO SHOULD ASSUME MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCREASING THE STRICTNESS OF DISCIPLINE?

As it relates to the middle schools, most pre-service teachers, teachers, school board members, superintendents, principals, counselors, parents, and students agree parents should assume more responsibility for increasing the strictness of discipline.

The question:

If discipline is not strict enough who should assume more responsibility for correcting the situation?

INSERT TABLE 3

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Pre-service teachers, parents, and students disagree with other norm goups regarding the place of corporal punishment in the junior high/middle school. Fifty-eight percent of the pre-service teachers, 75 percent of the parents, and 85 percent of the students responding approved of corporal punishment. Teachers, school board

members, superintendents, principals, and counselors universally approve of corporal punishment for junior high/middle school students.

The question:

> Spanking and similar forms of punishment are permitted in some junior high/middle schools for students who do not respond to other forms of discipline. Do you approve or disapprove of this practice?

INSERT TABLE 4

RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEALING WITH SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

When attempting to determine who should deal with specific junior high/middle school problems such as excessive absence, or vandalism, there appears to be little agreement. A study of the data indicates that, in most instances, a broad base of involvement would be optimum.

The question:

> Below are some students' behavioral problems which may occur in junior high/middle schools. In your opinion, who should deal with each kind of problem?

1. EXCESSIVE ABSENCE

A majority of the pre-service teachers polled agreed that the challenge of excessive absences for junior high/middle school students should be a joint concern for "parents/schools."

Teachers, school board members, and counselors indicated their preference for a "schools/courts/parents" consortium. Superintendents divided their responses between "parents" and "schools/courts/parents." Parents and students stated that absenteeism must be a primary responsibility of the "parent." Lack of agreement concerning who should deal with the problem was found within the principals' group.

The problem: Excessive absence

INSERT TABLE 4:1

2. VANDALISM

Lack of agreement in placing the responsibility for dealing with vandalism in the junior high/middle schools is found within pre-service teacher, principal, parent, and student groups. Most teachers and superintendents felt the responsibility should be with "parents." School board member and counselor groups chose to place the responsibility jointly with the "schools/courts/parents."

The problem: Vandalism

INSERT TABLE 4:2

3. BRINGING WEAPONS TO SCHOOL

When considering the problem of bringing weapons to

school, counselor, parent, and student groups could not reach agreement when attempting to assign the responsibility. The school board member group and the teacher group agreed to divide the responsibility among "schools/courts/parents." Pre-service teachers divided the responsibility between "courts" and "schools/courts/parents", superintendents between "parents" and "schools/courts/parents", and principals between "parents/schools" and "schools/courts."

The problem: Bringing weapons to school

INSERT TABLE 4:3

4. FIGHTING IN SCHOOL

A study of the data relating to fighting on the junior high/middle school campus indicated no strong agreement among counselors as to placement of responsibility. Pre-service teachers and counselors elected the "parents/schools" option. School board members agreed the responsibility should be jointly the concern of "school/courts/parents." Within the teacher group "schools" and "parents/schools" were selected more often. Superintendents strongly agreed parents were most responsible. Principals divided their choice between "schools" and "school/courts/parents," while students expressed the belief that the responsibility of dealing with fighting in junior high/middle schools belongs primarily to the schools.

The problem: Fighting

INSERT TABLE 4:4

5. STEALING MONEY OR CLOTHING FROM OTHER STUDENTS

An investigation of the data relating to stealing money or clothing from other students indicates that there is little agreement within the parent group regarding who should deal with the problem. In general, pre-serivce teachers selected the "parent/schools" option, while teachers, counselors, and school board members equated the responsibility between "schools/courts/parents." Principals and students divided their choices between "schools" and "parent/schools." Superintendents indicated the responsibility for dealing with stealing in the junior high/middle school should be with the "parent."

The problem: Stealing money or clothing from other students.

INSERT TABLE 4:5

6. STRIKING A TEACHER

An examination of the data relating to the problem of the striking of a teacher by a middle school student shows that there is little agreement concerning the responsibility for dealing with the behavioral problem within pre-service,

parent, and student groups. Teachers, school board members, superintendents and counselors agreed the problem should be a joint concern among "schools/courts/parents." Principals divided their responses between "schools/courts" and "schools/courts/parents" while parents divided their responses between "parents/schools" and "schools/courts/parents."

The problem: Striking a teacher

INSERT TABLE 4:6

THE USE OF MARIJUANA BY JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS - A PERSONAL RESPONSE

When questioned about the use of marijuana by junior high/middle school students, over 80 percent of the pre-service teachers responding believed it to be a serious problem. School board members and superintendents are equally divided in their opinion of the seriousness of the use, while students, parents, counselors, principals, and teachers view it less seriously.

The question:

> An increase of the use of marijuana by students is reported. Do you think it is a serious problem in junior high/middle schools?

INSERT TABLE 5

THE USE OF MARIJUANA BY JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS - A RESPONSE BASED ON WHAT ONE HEARS OR READS

Question eight attempted to determine the use of marijuana by junior high/middle school students based on what one hears or reads. The responses were only slightly different from those to question seven.

Over 80 percent of the pre-service teacher respondents believed the use of marijuana to be a serious problem based on what they had heard or read. School board members and superintendents were divided in their opinion, while students, parents, counselors, principals, and teachers tended to view it less seriously.

The question:

> From what you have heard or read, is the use of marijuana by students in junior high/middle schools a serious problem?

INSERT TABLE 6

THE USE OF ALCOHOL BY JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

Again, the perception of pre-service teachers varied from the other groups sampled. Seventy-three percent agreed the alcohol is a serious problem. Respondents from school board member, superintendent, and principal groups were divided equally while a greater number of teachers, counselors, parents, and

students agreed that the use of alcohol by junior high/middle school students is not a problem.

The question:

What about the use of alcohol (beer, wine, liquor) by students enrolled in junior high/middle schools?

INSERT TABLE 7

THE USE OF HARD DRUGS BY JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

All groups questioned tend to view the use of hard drugs as something less than a serious problem. Not a major surprise, pre-service teachers viewed hard drugs as being more serious than any other norm group.

The question:

What about hard drug use (herion, cocaine, etc.?) Is it a serious problem among students enrolled in junior high/middle schools?

INSERT TABLE 8

WHY STUDENTS DO POORLY IN SCHOOL

Children obviously do poorly in school for a variety of complex reasons. Question eleven attempted to discern where the major focus of fault should be placed. Pre-service teachers, teachers, counselors and parents tended to select the "child's home life" as the major problem area. School board members,

principals, and students divided the fault between the "child" and the "child's home life." Superintendents divided the cause of the problem between the "child's home life" and "don't know."

The question:

> When children do poorly in school some people place the blame on children, some on the children's home life, some on the school, and some on the teachers. Of course, all of these share the blame, but where would you place the chief blame?

INSERT TABLE 9

BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHT

Question twelve determines the respondents' attitude toward a back to junior high/middle school night to improve the child's behavior and/or motivation. Only the student group believed this to be a poor idea. School board members and superintendents divided their votes equally with all other groups agreeing that it was a viable solution.

The question:

> A suggestion has been made that parents of middle school children attend one evening class a month to find out what they can do at home to improve their children's behavior and increase interest in school work. Is it a good ideas or poor idea?

INSERT TABLE 10

THE MORAL BEHAVIOR OF JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN

Determining who should be responsible for the moral behavior of junior high/middle school children has always generated a healthy disagreement. (Finn and Doyle, 1983; James, 1981; Mackey, 1982.) An examination of the data collected from this study indicated pre-serivce teachers, counselors, parents and students feel schools should assume at least a major share of the accountability for moral responsibility. Teachers and school board members disagree with the issue,and superintendents and principals were equally divided within their group.

The question:

> Parents now have responsibility for the moral behavior of their children. Do you think that schools should take on a share of this responsibility?

INSERT TABLE 11

DAMAGE TO SCHOOL PROPERTY

Vandalism or damage to school property becomes a greater problem each year. Question fourteen places the responsibility for that damage. A strong majority of each of the eight groups agreed the parent should be made financially responsible for damage to school property done by their junior high/middle school children. Less than 20 percent of the preservice teachers and students disagreed, choosing to place the

responsibility elsewhere.

The question:

Should parents be made financially responsible for damage to school property done by their children?

INSERT TABLE 12

STEALING AMONG JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The taking of money, clothes, lunches, and books is believed to go on a great deal among junior high/middle school students. Pre-service teachers, superintendents, principals, counselors, and parents agree that it poses somewhat of a problem. Teachers and students feel it goes on a great deal. School board members feel it may go on some or very little.

The question:

From what you have heard or read is it your impression that stealing (money, clothes, lunches, books, etc.) goes on a geat deal, some, or very little in the local public schools?

INSERT TABLE 13

STUDENT SAFETY IN THE JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOLS

A review of the literature would lead one to believe that, in many instances, the middle school student has reason to fear for his physical safety. (Jones, 1981) Examination

of the data from this research did not agree. A majority of the respondents from each group questioned felt that there was no justifiable reasons for middle school students to fear for their safety.

INSERT TABLE 14

ABSENTEEISM IN THE JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Deciding whether it is better to force the student to attend school when he chooses otherwise or to dismiss him, thus denying him the opportunity for attendance, has posed a most serious problem for educators. (Katz, 1981) Pre-service teachers and practicing teachers believe the offending students should be dismissed. Counselors and parents would rather see them forced to attend. School board members, superintendents, principals, and students are not in agreement within their groups.

The question:

> In some of our schools, absenteeism is as high as 40 percent on a given day. In your opinion, should those students who are frequently absent without good reason be dismissed from school, or should they be forced to attend?

INSERT TABLE 15

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

More agreement was found within the data for this

attendance-related question than for question seventeen. Each of the eight groups questioned agreed parents should be held responsible for their children's school attendance. Only slight disagreement was found within the parent and student groups.

The question:

Should parents be held responsible for their children's school attendance?

INSERT TABLE 16

PARENTAL KNOWLEDGE OF ABSENTEEISM

An investigation of the data describing parental knowledge of absenteeism also shows an internal agreement. Each of the eight groups agreed it is possible for a junior high/middle school child to be absent without parental knowledge. Only slight disagreement is noted in the pre-service teacher, teacher, parent, and student groups.

The question:

Do you think it is possible for a child to be absent without parental knowledge?

INSERT TABLE 17

PUNITIVE MEASURES FOR ABSENTEEISM

The fourth question dealing with absenteeism attempts

to determine whether a parent should be fined for failing to see that his junior high/middle school child attends school. A study of the data suggests parents and students do not feel they should be fined. All other groups recommend court action.

The question:

> In your opinion, should parents be brought into court and given a fine when a child of theirs is frequently absent from school without excuse?

INSERT TABLE 18

KNOWLEDGE OF DUE PROCESS

In order that the interest of due process is served, a Supreme Court decision requires school officials to give written notice to a student and his parents, and to hold a hearing before a student can be suspended from school. A review of the data shows a significant number of pre-service teachers, counselors, parents, and students was unaware of this requirement. For the most part, teachers, school board members, superintendents, and principals are aware of the regulation.

The question:

> A U.S. Supreme Court decision requires school principals to give written notice to a student and his parents to hold a hearing when the student is suspended from school. Have you heard or read about this ruling?

INSERT TABLE 19

AFTERNOON SUPERVISION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

The "latchkey kid" phenomenon so recently brought to the forefront by popular literature indicates a concern which working parents have for their children who are at home alone without supervision. (Langway, et al, 1981; Garbarino, 1981; Wellborn, 1981) One suggested solution would be to have students remain at school until 5:00 p.m. When asked their opinion regarding this suggestion, school board members divided their responses equally between "yes" and "don't know." Principals divided their decision equally between "yes" and "no," thus indicating lack of agreement within the group. All other groups disagreed with superintendents being most strongly against the proposal.

The question:

> Most people who have jobs today do not get home until 5:00 p.m. or later. In your opinion, should the school arrange the afternoon schedule so that children would get home at about the same time as their parents?

INSERT TABLE 20

SCHOOL BOARD RESPECT AND CONFIDENCE

School board members are asked regularly to generate policy designated to ease disciplinary challenges and make classroom management a less difficult task. The extent of respect and confidence which others have in their ability to

deal with school problems influences their degree of success. (Weber, 1981) A study of this research data indicates that counselors, more than the other groups, polled have more respect and confidence in the ability of the school board. Superintendents divided their decision between "great deal of confidence" and "fair amount of confidence." School board members and principals divided their decision between "great deal of confidence" and "very little confidence." Pre-serivce teachers, teachers, parents, and students indicated a "fair amount of confidence."

The question:

In general, how much respect and confidence do you have in the ability of the local school boards to deal with school problems?

INSERT TABLE 21

THE SPECIAL JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL

When given the choice of a middle school with strict disciplinary procedures or a "regular" junior high/middle school, a greater number of students selected the latter. Pre-service teachers and superintendents were divided in their opinions. Teachers, school board members, principals, counselors, and parents selected the strict environment.

The question:

In some U.S. cities, parents of school children are being given the choice of sending their children to a special middle school that has

strict discipline, including a dress code, and that puts emphasis in the three "R's." If you lived in one of those cities, and had children of school age, would you send them to such a school?

INSERT TABLE 22

CLASS SIZE

When respondents are asked whether they think class size has an effect upon the achievement of students, each of the eight groups agree that it does. Pre-service teachers, teachers, parents, and students disagree within their groups as to the amount of difference class size makes. School board members, superintendents, principals, and counselors agreed that class size makes a great deal of difference.

The question:

In some school districts, the typical class has as many as 35 students, in other districts only 20. In regard to the achievement or progress of students, do you think small classes make a great deal of difference, little difference, or no difference at all?

INSERT TABLE 23

SCHOOL/COMMUNITY SIZE

Equally strong arguments may be advanced for the effect which community size has on the academic achievement of the middle school child. (Weldon, et al, 1981; Grant, 1981) A study of the

data indicates little agreement among the groups. Pre-service teachers selected "suburban schools" over "small communities" or "big city schools." Teachers did not know what to select. Counselors and students selected "small community schools." Superintendents, principals, and parents divided their selection equally between "small community schools" and "suburban schools." School board members divided their decisions equally between "small community" and "don't know."

The question:

> In general, do you think that students today get a better education in schools that are located in small communities, suburbans, or schools located in big cities?

INSERT TABLE 24

DEALING WITH DISINTEREST

Most educators agree that student disinterest can be a major cause of classroom management challenges with the problem junior high/middle school. However, strategies for dealing with the disinterested are many and varied. When given the choices of "isolation," "teacher motivation," "student involvement," and "reassignment," parents selected "teacher motivation" as the needed strategy. School board members divided their decision between "isolate" and some other unidentified strategy. Principals divided their selection between "teacher motivation" and an unnamed strategy, and students selected "isolation" and

"teacher motivation" most often. Pre-service teachers chose to involve the students while teachers and counselors elected to reassign them to a more appropriate course.

The question:

> Some students appear to be disinterested in school. Often, they keep other students from working. What should be done in these cases?

INSERT TABLE 25

THE EFFECT OF INTEREST ON DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

A study of the data related to the relationship between schools/teachers' ability to interest the junior high/middle school student in learning and the number of discipline problems indicates that pre-service teachers, superintendents, counselors, parents, and students agree if the schools and teachers interest the children in learning, most disciplinary problems would disappear. Teachers and principals disagree while school board members are divided in their opinion.

The question:

> Some people say that if the schools and teachers interest the children in learning, most disciplinary problems disappear. Do you agree or disagree?

INSERT TABLE 26

WORK ASSIGNMENT WITHIN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Along with the back to basics and time on task movements has come an appeal in the popular media for the assignment of more work. (Enos, 1983) An investigation of the data relating to this concern indicates pre-service teachers, teachers, and parents agree students are assigned less work today. School board members, superintendents and counselors believe students are not assigned less work today. Students and principals have dissention within their groups and are divided in their positions.

The question:

> Some educators claim that children are not achieving as well in school today, as they did twenty years ago because they are given about one-third less work to do in school and after school. Do you think children are assigned less work today?

INSERT TABLE 27

SELECTED FINDINGS

The following selected findings were formulated from an analysis of the data:

(1) The working hypothesis for the study stated there would be a difference in the perceptions and attitudes among the various groups polled. In a clear majority of instances, the hypothesis was accepted;

(2) A majority of the respondents reported parents should assume more responsibility for correcting the disciplinary problems of the child (Table 3);

(3) A majority within all groups approved of spanking in the junior high/middle school. Each of the respondents from the administration, teacher, school-board, superintendent, prinicpal, and counselor groups found corporal punishment to be an acceptable alternative (Table 4);

(4) A majority of those responding approved of assigning behavioral responsibility jointly to schools/courts/parents. When asked to select only one alternative, the predominant choice was "parents" (Tables 4:1 through 4:6);

(5) Among those groups who reported the use of marijuana by junior high/middle school students at a level less than "serious" were teachers, principals, counselors, parents, and students. However, eighty-one percent of the pre-service teachers polled reported the use of marijuana to be a serious problem. School board members and superintendents were divided within their groups (Tables 5 and 6);

(6) Among those groups who reported the use of alcohol by junior high/middle school students to be less

than serious were teachers, counselors, parents, and students. However, seventy-three percent of those reporting from the pre-service group believed the use of alcohol to be a serious problem. School board members, superintendents, and principals were divided within their groups. (Table 7);

(7) A majority of all groups polled stated the use of hard drugs was something less than serious. No less than seventy-seven percent reported it to be less than serious (Table 8);

(8) A majority of those polled placed the blame of the junior high/middle school child's poor school work with his home life. The student's responses were divided between the child and the child's home life (Table 9);

(9) All adults favored returning to school to determine how they might improve the child's school work. Students disagreed with the idea (Table 10);

(10) Among those questioned about the parent's responsibility for the moral behavior of their children, a majority within the pre-service teacher, counselor, parent, and student groups placed part of the responsibility with the school. Only teacher and school board members reported the responsibility

should not be placed with the school. Superintendents and prinicpals were divided within their groups (Table 11);

(11) When asked whether parents should be made financially responsible for their child's damage to school property, all administrators responded affirmatively. Other groups were in unanimous agreement with the exception of pre-service teachers, parents, and students (Table 12);

(12) Teachers agreed unanimously there is a great deal of stealing within the junior high/middle school. Administrators reported they perceived some or very little stealing goes on in the public schools. Pre-service teachers disagreed within their group (Table 13);

(13) A majority of all groups agreed there is no reason to fear for the physical safety of a student in the junior high/middle school (Table 14);

(14) There was a lack of agreement among the groups concerning whether students should be required to attend school (Table 15);

(15) Administrators agreed class size makes a difference in the quality of instruction. However, a better education could not be attributed to either the

small, urban, or suburban community (Tables 23 and 24); and

(16) Teachers and principals do not agree with the concept that if teachers interest the children in learning most disciplinary problems will disappear. However, other groups report teacher interest in the classroom will result in more effective management.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to analyze the current perceptions of selected school board members, superintendents, principals, counselors, teachers, pre-service teachers, students, and parents toward topics related to discipline, classroom management, drugs, absenteeism, and behavioral responsibility within the junior high/middle school setting.

Utilizing information gained through training in the PACE (Polling Attitudes of Community on Education) program, the questionnaire was designed to replicate the Gallup Poll at local levels. The advantage of replication was the attainment of validity and reliability of the instrument. On specific items, state responses were compared to national responses. The research explored perceptions and attitudes held between and among school board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors, pre-service teachers, parents, and students in three areas of Texas representing urban, suburban, and rural areas with a total

of 190 responses. Patterned after the Gallup Poll, charts were developed to graphically describe attitudes and perceptions held by the eleven categories on topics related to discipline, classroom management, drugs, absenteeism, and responsibility within the junior high/middle school setting.

After examination of the findings, the conclusion is evident that a significant difference in the perceptions and attitudes is held by the various groups polled.

Further research is needed to investigate larger samples of population on attitudes and perceptions on major issues of classroom management. One consideration for future studies would be to use correlational methodology to investigate the relationships among the complex variables.

In examining the findings, conclusions about attitudes and perceptions toward discipline, classroom management, drugs, absenteeism, and responsibility were derived.

The data indicate a definite polarization of perception of discipline problems and consequentially of classroom management. Pre-service teachers, parents, and students believe that discipline is a "fairly serious" problem while the school personnel feel it is "not too serious." Teachers and students believe stealing is a problem in school, and yet other groups do not perceive a problem exists. The findings indicate good classroom management comes from teachers who motivate and interest the children in learning according to the perception of all groups except 72 percent of the teachers. No conclusion can be made about the benefit of community/school

size in relation to better classroom management; however, a study of the data indicates class size makes a difference.

On the questions about drugs, pre-service teachers, who were in college at the time of the poll, believed marijuana and alcohol are serious problems in junior high/middle schools. Surprisingly, teachers and counselors did not think marijuana and alcohol are a problem. Parents were the only group who said they did not know to a great degree.

The findings indicate all groups are undecided as to the proper action to be taken on absenteeism.

The examination of the findings indicates a desire for more responsibility on the part of the parents about the behavior of students. In assessing who is to blame for misbehavior, the chief source is the home life of the child which, in turn, is the parent. Overwhelmingly, respondents requested more financial responsibility for vandalism damage be assumed by the parents. Few considered the courts as the major recourse. Other issues, such as striking a teacher, appeared to place the responsibility equally with the schools and parents. The implications are that not all parties resort to court action as the solution.

In conclusion, a study of the Texas state responses indicated a greater concern about discipline and classroom management problems than the national responses. Generalizing the overall responses, a review of the Texas data indicated that the teachers' lack of interest, the parents' lack of interest, and the students' lack of interest were much higher than the national totals. Respondents in Texas reported the use of drugs to be less a problem

than the national poll indicated. Lack of discipline was reported even more of a problem than demonstrated in the national figures.

Implications derived from the study point to an undecided stand on many issues which would lead to a lack of defining the real problems. For example, is there an alcohol/drug/marijuana problem or not? If counselors, who deal with problem children daily, say there is not a problem, and yet others say there is a problem, what is occuring? Is there a denial of facts, or are the facts distorted? What is the attitude of administrators about dealing with discipline problems, especially if they do not perceive any serious problems? What are the teacher education programs to relay to future teachers about discipline problems, support from administrators, and attitudes of parents?

People who work closely in the schools (superintendents, principals, teachers, counselors) have a different perspective about discipline problems than do students and parents who believe the problems are serious. All of the questions dealing with discipline indicate disparate points of views.

Studies of attitudes and perceptions reveal the problems in communication between school personnel, students, and parents. Disclosure of these attitudes and perceptions encourage better communication and can act as a catalyst for discussion and understanding about concerns and issues.

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Figure 1. Distribution Flow Chart of Sample

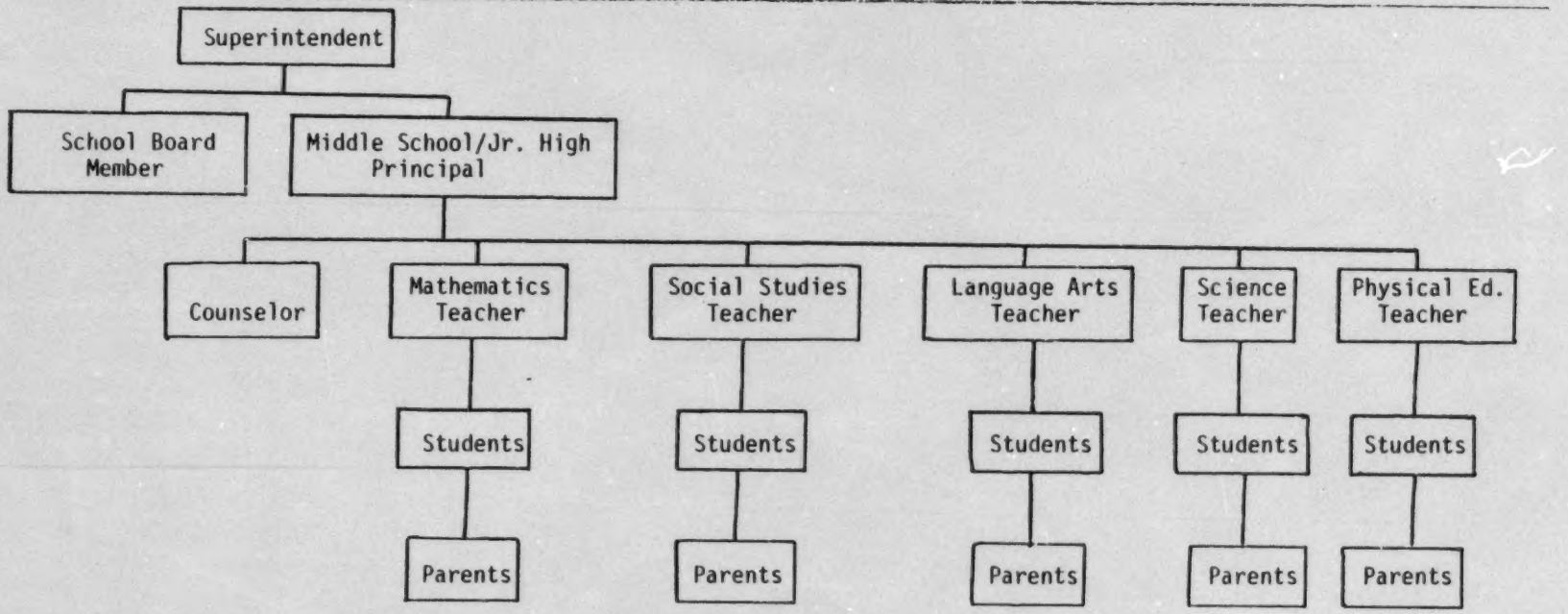

Table 1

Variance in Definitions of Discipline

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Obeying rules/ regulations	85	100	100	50	100	100	88	72
Authority/control by teachers	65	43	50	50	50	0	56	38
Respect for teachers	42	57	50	50	50	33	44	44
Students' lack of willingness to learn	31	57	0	50	0	33	6	0
Fighting/violence	38	43	50	50	0	33	6	3
Smoking/drugs	42	43	50	50	0	33	6	0
Micellaneous	4	14	0	50	0	0	0	3
Don't know	4	0	0	0	0	0	6	0
Other	12	14	0	50	0	0	0	3

Table 2

The Seriousness of Discipline in Public Schools

	Very Serious %	Fairly Serious %	Not too Serious %	Not at all Serious %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	8	73	15	0	4
Teachers	14	29	57	0	0
School Board Members	0	0	100	0	0
Superintendents	0	50	50	0	0
Principals	0	0	50	50	0
Counselors	0	0	67	0	33
Parents	13	47	25	6	9
Students	14	51	35	0	0

Figure 2. National and State Attitudes on Discipline

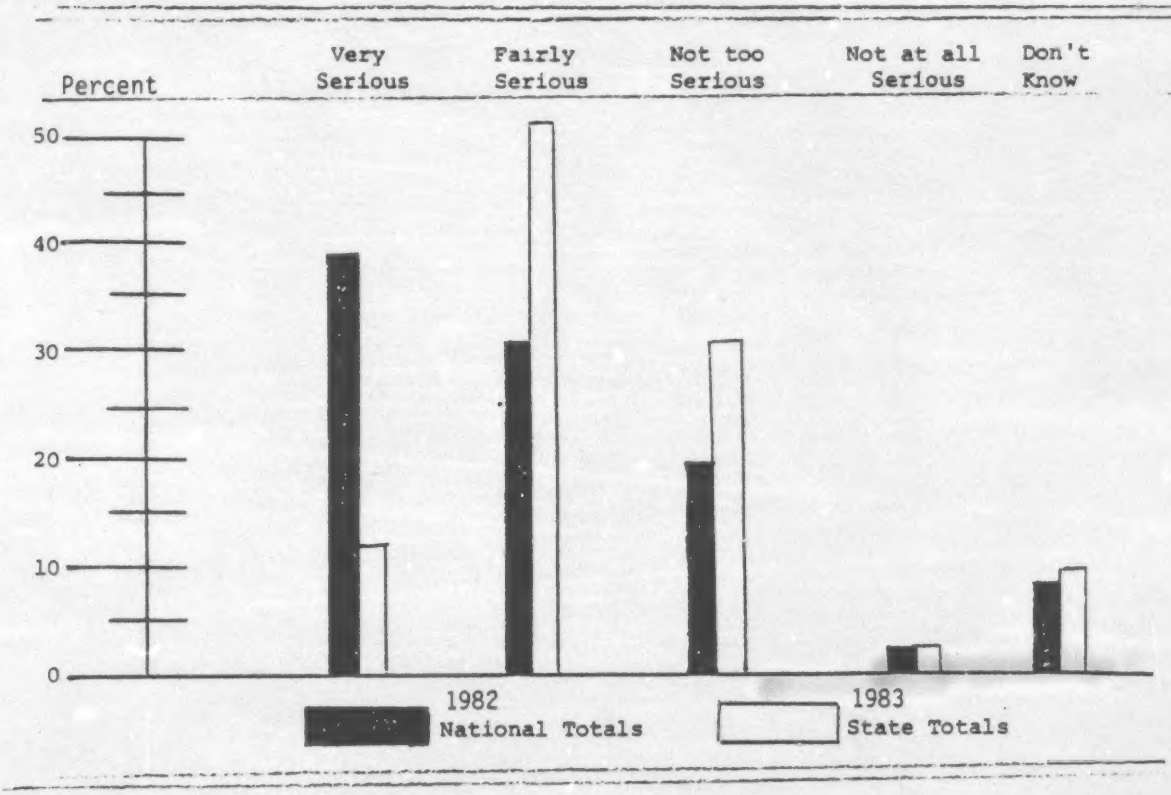

Figure 3. Major Problems Confronting The Public Schools, 1982 and 1983

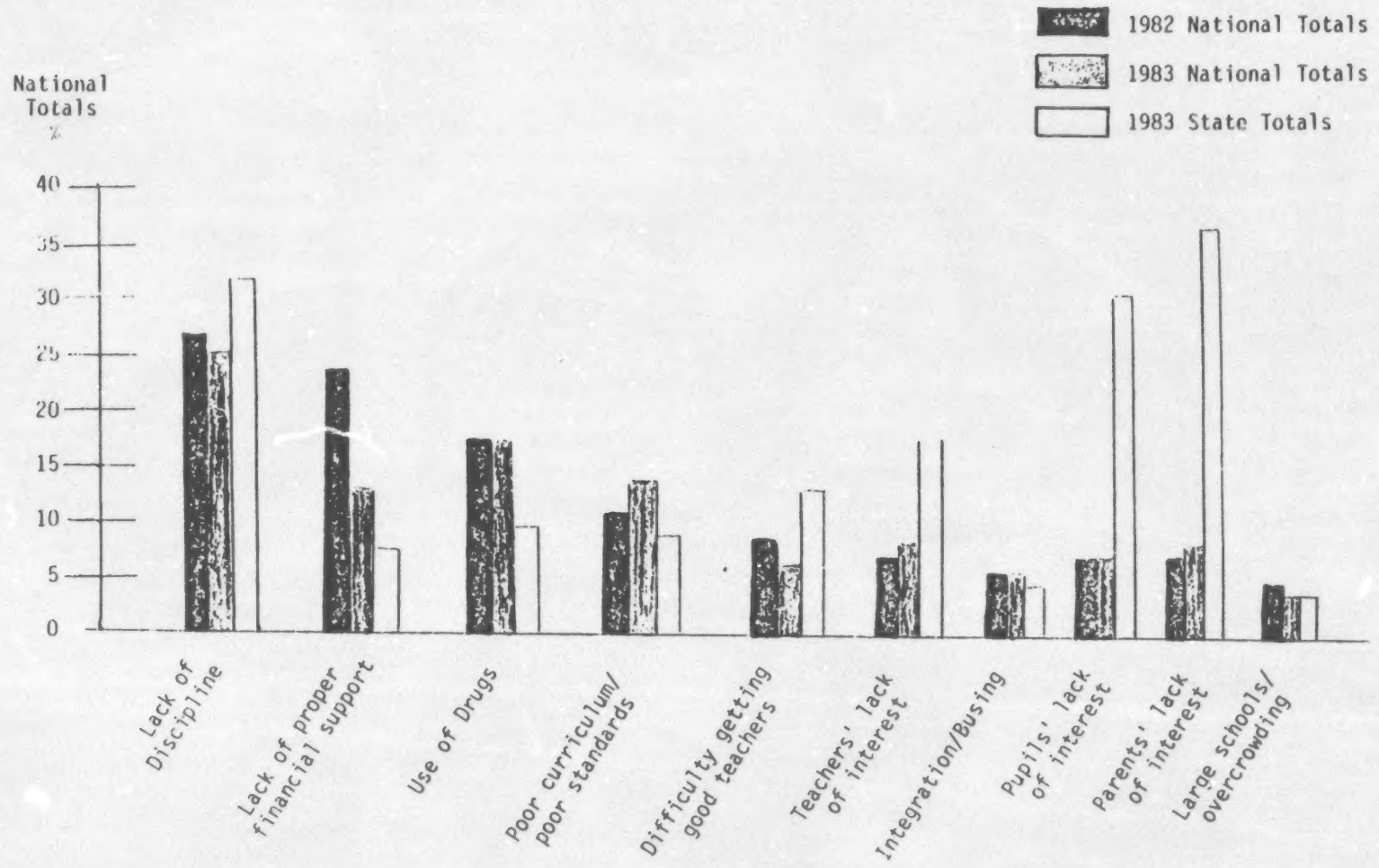

Table 3

DISCIPLINE: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

The question:

If discipline is not strict enough who should assume more responsibility for correcting the situation?

	Parents %	Teachers %	Students %	School Boards %
Pre-Service Teachers	85	42	23	19
Teachers	86	6	14	9
School Board Members	100	50	50	50
Superintendents	100	0	0	0
Principals	100	0	0	0
Counselors	67	33	0	0
Parents	75	28	6	19
Students	57	40	26	26

(Figures may add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Table 4

DISCIPLINE: TO SPANK OR NOT?

The question:

Spanking and similar forms of punishment are permitted in some middle schools for students who do not respond to other forms of discipline. Do you approve or disapprove of this practice?

	Approve %	Disapprove %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	58	38	4
Teachers	100	0	0
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	75	22	3
Students	86	14	0

Table 4:1

Excessive Absence

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Parents	19	14	0	50	50	0	50	51
Schools	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Courts	0	0	0	0	50	0	3	0
Parents/Schools	65	0	0	0	0	0	13	29
Parents/Courts	8	0	0	0	50	0	0	3
Schools/Courts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
All Three	8	86	100	50	50	100	22	6

Table 4:2

Vandalism

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Parents	15	29	0	50	0	0	3	0
Schools	4	0	0	0	50	0	3	14
Courts	19	0	0	0	50	0	19	23
Parents/Schools	12	14	0	0	50	0	9	23
Parents/Courts	8	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
Schools/Courts	12	0	0	0	50	33	16	3
All Three	31	14	100	50	0	67	34	11

Table 4:3

Bring Weapons to Schools

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Parents	8	14	0	50	0	0	6	11
Schools	8	14	0	0	0	0	9	26
Courts	27	0	0	0	0	0	6	14
Parents/Schools	15	0	0	0	50	33	22	17
Parents/Courts	4	14	0	0	0	0	3	3
Schools/Courts	12	0	0	0	50	33	38	9
All Three	27	43	100	50	0	33	38	11

Table 4:4

Fighting in School

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Parents	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	6
Schools	38	43	0	50	50	33	16	46
Courts	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Parents/Schools	58	43	0	0	0	33	50	34
Parents/Courts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Schools/Courts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All Three	4	14	100	0	50	33	19	3

Table 4:5

Responsibility for Stealing

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
Parents	0	0	0	100	0	0	9	9
Schools	12	0	0	50	50	33	19	26
Courts	8	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
Parents/Schools	46	43	0	0	50	0	28	31
Parents/Courts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Schools/Courts	8	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
All Three	27	57	100	0	0	67	22	11

Table 4:6

Striking a Teacher

	Pre-Service Teachers	Teachers	School Board Members	Superintendent	Principals	Counselors	Parents	Students
Parents	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
Schools	12	0	0	0	0	0	16	9
Courts	12	14	0	0	0	0	3	20
Parents/Schools	31	14	0	0	0	0	22	17
Parents/Courts	4	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Schools/Courts	8	0	0	0	50	33	3	3
All Three	35	71	100	100	50	67	34	17

Table 5

IS MARIJUANA USE A SERIOUS PROBLEM?

The question:

An increase of the use of marijuana by students is reported. Do you think it is a serious problem in middle schools?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	81	19	0
Teachers	14	86	0
School Board Members	50	50	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	0	100	0
Counselors	0	100	0
Parents	25	59	16
Students	26	74	0

Table 6

IS MARIJUANA USE A SERIOUS PROBLEM?

The question:

From what you have heard or read, is the use of marijuana by students enrolled in junior high(middle schools) a serious problem?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	81	14	5
Teachers	14	86	0
School Board Members	50	50	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	0	100	0
Counselors	0	100	0
Parents	22	63	15
Students	31	69	0

Table 7

ALCHOHOL USE

The question:

Is the use of alcohol(beer, wine, liquor) by students enrolled in junior high(middle schools) a serious problem?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	73	27	0
Teachers	14	86	0
School Board Members	50	50	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	50	50	0
Counselors	0	100	0
Parents	13	72	15
Students	31	69	0

Table 8

HARD DRUG USE

The question:

What about hard drug use(heroin, cocaine, etc.)? Is it a serious problem among students enrolled in junior high(middle schools)?

	Yes %	No %
Pre-Service Teachers	23	77
Teachers	14	86
School Board Members	0	100
Superintendents	0	100
Principals	0	100
Counselors	0	100
Parents	3	97
Students	14	86

Table 9

WHO IS TO BLAME?

The question:

When children do poorly in school, some people place the blame on children, some on the children's home life, some on the school, and some on the teachers. Of course, all of these share the blame, but where would you place the chief blame?

	Child %	Child's Home Life %	School %	Teachers %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	27	50	0	19	4
Teachers	0	86	0	14	0
School Board Members	50	50	0	0	0
Superintendents	0	50	0	0	50
Principals	50	50	0	0	0
Counselors	0	100	0	0	0
Parents	29	52	2	17	0
Students	43	43	3	11	0

Table 10

NIGHT SCHOOL FOR PARENTS?

The question:

A suggestion has been made that parents of middle school children attend one evening class a month to find out what they can do at nome to improve their children's behavior and increase interest in school work. Is it a good idea or a poor idea?

	Yes, good idea %	No, poor idea %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	96	4	0
Teachers	86	14	0
School Board Members	50	50	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	78	22	0
Students	40	31	29

Table 11

SHOULD SCHOOLS TEACH MORALS?

The question:

Parents now have responsibility for the moral behavior of their children. Do you think that schools should take on a share of this responsibility?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	58	42	0
Teachers	29	57	14
School Board Members	0	100	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	50	50	0
Counselors	67	33	0
Parents	56	44	0
Students	74	26	0

Table 12

SHOULD PARENTS PAY FOR VANDALISM?

The question:

Should parents be made financially responsible for damage to school property done by their children?

	Yes %	No %
Pre-Service Teachers	81	19
Teachers	100	0
School Board Members	100	0
Superintendents	100	0
Principals	100	0
Counselors	100	0
Parents	91	9
Students	83	17

Table 13

STEALING

The question:

From what you have heard or read, is it your impression that stealing (money, clothes, lunches, books, etc.) goes on a great deal, some, or very little in the local public schools?

	Great Deal %	Some %	Very Little %
Pre-Service Teachers	46	54	0
Teachers	100	0	0
School Board Members	0	50	50
Superintendents	0	100	0
Principals	0	100	0
Counselors	33	67	0
Parents	42	48	10
Students	51	37	12

Table 14

FEAR FOR SAFETY

The question:

In general, is there a need to fear the physical safety of a student in the middle school?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	19	77	4
Teachers	0	86	14
School Board Members	0	100	0
Superintendents	0	100	0
Principals	0	100	0
Counselors	0	100	0
Parents	16	84	0
Students	14	83	3

Table 15

ABSENTEEISM

The question:

In some of our schools, absenteeism is as high as 40% on a given day. In your opinion, should those students who are frequently absent without good reason be dismissed from school, or should they be forced to attend?

	Dismissed %	Forced to attend %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	50	38	12
Teachers	57	43	0
School Board Members	50	50	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	50	50	0
Counselors	33	67	0
Parents	28	69	3
Students	51	49	0

Table 16

PARENTS RESPONSIBLE FOR ATTENDANCE

The question:

Should parents be held responsible for their children's school attendance?

	Parents held responsible %	Parents not held responsible %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	96	0	4
Teachers	100	0	0
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	91	6	3
Students	91	6	3

Table 17

ABSENT WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

The question:

Do you think it is possible for a child to be absent without parental knowledge?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	92	4	4
Teachers	86	0	14
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	81	16	3
Students	91	9	0

Table 18

PARENTS FINED FOR ABSENTEEISM

The question:

In your opinion, should parents be brought into court and given a fine when a child of theirs is frequently absent from school without excuse?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	92	4	4
Teachers	86	0	14
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	44	53	3
Students	26	74	0

Table 19

DUE PROCESS

The question:

A U.S. Supreme Court decision requires school principals to give written notice to a student and his parents and hold a hearing when the student is suspended from school. Have you heard about this ruling?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	38	62	0
Teachers	71	0	29
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	33	67	0
Parents	44	53	3
Students	26	74	0

Table 20

LONGER SCHOOL DAY

The question:

Most people who have jobs today do not get home until 5 p.m. or later. In your opinion, should the school arrange the afternoon schedule so that children would get home at about the same time as their parents?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	35	65	0
Teachers	29	57	14
School Board Members	50	0	50
Superintendents	0	100	0
Principals	50	50	0
Counselors	33	67	0
Parents	22	78	0
Students	11	86	3

Table 21

CONFIDENCE IN SCHOOL BOARDS

The question:

In general, how much respect and confidence do you have in the ability of the local school boards to deal with school problems?

	Great deal of Confidence %	Fair amount of Confidence %	Very Little Confidence %	None %
Pre-Service Teachers	0	61	35	0
Teachers	0	58	15	27
School Board Members	50	0	50	0
Superintendents	50	50	0	0
Principals	50	0	50	0
Counselors	100	0	0	0
Parents	19	65	13	3
Students	9	68	23	0

Table 22

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

The question:

In some U.S. cities, parents of school children are being given the choice of sending their children to a special middle school that has strict discipline, including a dress code, and that puts emphasis on the three R's. If you lived in one of these cities, and had children of school age, would you send them to such a school?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	50	50	0
Teachers	72	14	14
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	50	50	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	56	41	3
Students	37	63	0

Table 23

CLASS SIZE

The question:

In some school districts, the typical class has as many as 35 students; in other districts, only 20. In regard to the achievement or progress of students, do you think small classes make a great deal of difference, little difference, or no difference at all?

	Great deal of difference %	Little difference %	No difference %
Pre-Service Teachers	77	23	0
Teachers	72	14	14
School Board Members	100	0	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	100	0	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	84	16	0
Students	77	17	6

Table 24

SCHOOL SIZE

The question:

In general, do you think that students today get a better education in schools that are located in small communities, suburbans, or in schools located in big cities?

	Small Communities %	Suburban Schools %	Big City Schools %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	38	50	12	0
Teachers	14	29	14	43
School Board Members	50	0	0	50
Superintendents	50	50	0	0
Principals	50	50	0	0
Counselors	67	33	0	0
Parents	44	47	9	0
Students	49	31	14	6

Table 25

UNMOTIVATED STUDENTS

The question:

Some students appear to be disinterested in school. Often, they keep other students from working. What should be done in these cases?

	Isolation %	Teacher investigate and motivate %	Involve Students %	Reassign to appropriate courses %	Other %
Pre-Service Teachers	12	54	58	31	4
Teachers	43	14	14	57	14
School Board Members	50	0	0	0	50
Superintendents	0	0	0	0	100
Principals	0	50	0	0	50
Counselors	33	33	33	67	0
Parents	25	31	9	28	6
Students	31	31	9	14	14

(Figures may add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.)

Table 26

TEACHERS' DUTY TO MOTIVATE

The question:

Some people say that if the schools and teachers interest the children in learning, most disciplinary problems disappear. Do you agree or disagree?

	Agree %	Disagree %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	77	19	4
Teachers	14	72	14
School Board Members	50	50	0
Superintendents	100	0	0
Principals	0	100	0
Counselors	100	0	0
Parents	75	25	0
Students	74	23	3

Table 27

WORK LOAD

The question:

Some educator claim that children are not achieving as well in school today as they did 20 years ago because they are given about one-third less work to do in school and after school. Do you think children are assigned less work today?

	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
Pre-Service Teachers	62	38	0
Teachers	86	0	14
School Board Members	0	100	0
Superintendents	0	100	0
Principals	50	50	0
Counselors	33	67	0
Parents	50	47	3
Students	48	46	6